

Sports News

September 2008 – Newsletter of the **Utah Salt Lake City Area Sports**

THOUGHTS FROM A PROPHET

“Sportsmanship is the spirituality in athletics, and we believe that the Church athletic program is a spiritual program. If it wasn’t, we wouldn’t continue it, because our purpose is to build men and women of character and spirituality.”
(Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, page 437)

THE MOST POPULAR EVENT IN THE WORLD

Some 4 billion people watched the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Summer Games from Beijing China, last month, with many viewing a variety of sporting events in the weeks that followed. The outstanding prowess of the athletes as they strove individually and in teams to reach the zenith of their mental and physical abilities was an inspiration to all of us.

Clearly, athletic competition is of interest to people around the globe, and the aspiration of the Games is to persuade the nations of the world to set aside their political and economic differences for a few cherished days every two years to celebrate our common interests as a worldwide community.

Some question the competitive nature of sports: is it really fair to prosper at someone else’s expense; do nations really set aside their national interest, or simply use the Games as yet another forum to compete; and what of the heartbreak to those who don’t win a medal?

The answer is that competition, when properly focused and well managed, improves everyone – both the winners and the losers. It is through

striving that we move closer to perfection, and every athlete who competes expresses the best that she or he has to offer, regardless of the score at the end of the event. All return home better for the experience.

Of course Church Sports isn’t nearly as competitive as the Olympics or other sporting events. It’s mostly just neighbors, athletically talented, or not, who come together to enjoy each other’s fellowship and to get some healthy exercise in a communal activity.

But even in Church Sports, competition isn’t bad. To the degree that it motivates a sleepy-headed sixteen year old to get out of bed early on a Saturday morning so he can help his team, it is teaching valuable lessons about life, including personal self-discipline, sacrifice, teamwork, and good sportsmanship. Competition is what makes an event challenging and fun. It’s only when a participant gets angry, or seeks to gain an unfair advantage, that it becomes destructive. But that’s where the gospel steps in. One of the primary purposes of mortality is to learn how to control our bodies and our spirits, including managing anger and other negative emotions. In a very real way, sportsmanship is a good proxy for how well we live our lives. As we get better at it, we are happier. So it is with life.

In that regard, you might want to think of Church Sports as a great laboratory where members and non-member friends can gain the benefits of sports without the intense pressure that comes from professional, community, and school sports. It’s a forum where everyone who is interested can be part of the team.

Most of all, it's just fun. It's great to live in a place where there are enough members to support an active Church Sports program. Hopefully you and the members of your stake and ward are taking full advantage of these great opportunities.

MILLCREEK STAKE TAKES A HIKE

Jamie Walker reports that a number of years ago the Millcreek Stake wanted to involve more members in their Sports program, so they started with mini-soccer and then added the Millcreek Stake Hiking Club to go hiking in area canyons. These efforts were so successful that they sponsored a 5K Run and 1 Mile Walk/Run. The first year saw 60 participants. In 2007 other stakes in the Holladay Region asked to join in, doubling participation to more than 250. Next up is "11 on 11 Soccer." The Spanish and Brazilian Branches are particularly looking forward to meeting with their Norte Americano counterparts in this activity. The key to success for non-traditional Church Sports are volunteers to organize and promote the activities in the stakes and wards. Perhaps you could conduct a poll in your units to see who would be willing to help organize great events like these in Millcreek.

GOLF – GROWING IN POPULARITY

According to Chris Mecham, Oquirrh Division Men's Director, the game of golf is growing in popularity as a church endorsed activity. For example, in 2007 there were 192 participants in 48 groups who participated in our Area Golf Tournament.

Since golf is viewed by most golfers as a social activity, it's very easy to mix members of the Church with their non-member and less active friends. Conversations about life, families, and the Church develop easily and naturally in the beautiful environment of area golf courses.

Perhaps that's why golf is often sponsored by Priesthood Quorums as a relaxing Saturday activity for interested members (at the golfer's own expense). As an example, the South Jordan Region has some 25 to 30 groups who play regularly.

This year's Area Tournament is scheduled for *Stonebridge Golf Club* on September 6, 2008. Contact Ray Goodson, Area Golf Specialist, at 801-455-2644 if you'd like to know more.

DID YOU KNOW?

- That less active members often make excellent coaches, which helps them interact with other members in a favorable environment? This is particularly true when they are properly trained in the rules of their sport.
- That this past year **more than 300,000 members** of the church in the Salt Lake City Area participated in at least one of 36 Church Sponsored Sports?

IT'S INDIAN SUMMER – HAVE FUN!

And who better to have fun with than your neighbors and friends in the Church. For help in organizing an active program you can contact:

Utah Salt Lake City Area Leaders

- Harold Turley, Area Director, 942-5630
- Lori Zundel, Women's Director, 942-5446
- John Pohlman, Asst. Director, 244-0171
- Kae Strong, Officials Director, 568-7853
- Gary and Suzanne Larsen, YSA Directors, 699-9950
- Jerry Borrowman, **Activator, 571-9258**, jerryborrowman@hotmail.com

Wasatch Division Leaders

- Jeff Cutrer, Men's Director, 598-4020
- Tricia McDonald, Women's Dir., 255-3324
- Thayne Gooch, Officials Coord. 943-1333

Oquirrh Division Leaders

- Chris Mecham, Men's Director, 253-3515
- Sharon Jackson, Women's Director, 414-0274
- Brent Kemp, Officials Coord., 254-0827

Area Sports Specialists

- Ken Erickson, **Volleyball**, 576-0059
- Ray Shepherd, **Basketball**, 680-4535
- Bob Bedont, **Futsal**, 966-7209
- Terry Miller, **Softball**, 598-2096
- Ray Goodson, **Golf**, 455-2644

These folks have all been called and set apart by proper Priesthood Authority to help you implement an effective Church Sports program. We'd love to help you do that, so give us a call.